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Review by: Carlos A. León
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TRAPPED: FAMILIES AND SCHIZOPHRENIA

LLOYD ROGLER AND AUGUST B. HOLLINGSHEAD

New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1965
xiii + 436 pp., \$8.95

This book could be thought of as a scientific report on factors related to mental illness among families of the low socio-economic class in Puerto Rico. It may also serve as a sociological essay on mores and attitudes prevalent in the Puerto Rican culture. As a result of an interdisciplinary effort, the book shows a minimal amount of stylistic if not conceptual heterogeneity. Side by side with bits of psychiatry are superb portrayals of the people and their way of life, made vivid and colorful by a generous use of vernacular expressions skillfully translated. This reviewer is deeply impressed with the wealth of information and depth of insight which the book offers on family life, behavioral patterns, social interactions and the effects of mental illness among slum and *caserío* dwellers of San Juan.

The basic aim of the work is an exploratory study of sociocultural settings in relation to mental illness. Emphasis is placed on intra-familial interactions and their changes under the influence of disturbed individuals. Following the postulate that personal experiences in an "effective social environment" condition the development and onset of schizophrenia, a group of families in which the head of the household is living with a spouse, is studied intensively through a series of eight schedules designed in cooperation with anthropologists, psychiatrists and social workers. The study group is composed of 20 families each containing a schizophrenic husband, wife or both. The control group is composed of 20 families the spouses of which are either free of mental illness or show neurotic traits. In both groups the ages range from 20 to 39 years. The authors state

that if they were to do the study again they "would expend great effort to select a symptom-free control group." Indeed, an unknown amount of overlapping may have biased the results.

The authors satisfy themselves that the sample is representative by comparing the 40 families of the study with a probability sample of 104 families drawn from a carefully planned sample survey. Extreme care was exercised in selecting the interviewers. Of more than 100 candidates, only five were selected during a period of five months. These personnel spent from 110 to 125 hours interviewing family members.

The study deals exclusively with people belonging to class V of the two factor index of social position. This includes two-thirds of the Puerto Rican population. It is numerically the largest sector, economically the poorest and culturally, as well as socially, the most deprived.

The book is divided into six parts dealing successively with: the problem and the method, the childhood years, becoming an adult, becoming a schizophrenic, the impact of schizophrenia on the family and the future.

Data presented in Part II show no association between mental status of the respondents and their birth place, parental occupation, economic problems of the family of orientation, interpersonal problems, infidelity, excessive drinking or broken homes in the families of orientation. The only significant finding is that a larger proportion of sick women claim that they were severely punished during childhood. In summary, no conclusive evidence is shown of any significant association between variables in parent-child relations as explored by the authors, and mental status of the respondents.

Part II also states that Puerto Rico is in the grip of the same massive wave of internal rural-urban migration which is the prevailing pattern all over Latin America. Five out of every six respondents migrated to San Juan from the community in which they were born. No association is shown between mental status and migration. Regarding marriage patterns, schizophrenics are ascertained to establish legal unions significantly more often than non-schizophrenics and they marry women of their own age or older.

Chapter eight is rich with incidental information about manners, morals and behavior patterns of the Puerto Rican society. Vivid descriptions of the courtship patterns emphasize the practice of double standards, the cult of virginity and the exercise of incongruous puritanical controls. Differences in the meaning of marriage for the two sexes are that "the women *get married* by having sexual intercourse: the men *become married* by gradually assuming the obligations of a husband."

Part IV may lead to more discussion and speculation than any other part of the book. No association is shown between the ascribed mental illness in the families of orientation and the mental status of the respondents. This finding contradicts what is found among the study group's own children and it may point to the unreliability of subjective appraisals and retrospective accounts in contrast to well documented genealogical surveys.

The significant increase in the rate of *reported* physical illness during the five years prior to the field work prompts the authors to state that "schizophrenia has a marked effect on physical illness," and again: "schizophrenia has a discernible effect on the physical illness experiences of one or both members of a spouse pair." These causality-implying affirmations are neutralized by one that says, "Our data do not enable us to draw any inferences as to whether the linkage between schizophrenia and physical symptoms is a causal phenomenon, a concomitant one or a sequential one."

Child deaths are significantly clustered in the families with sick spouses. In every instance, a child's death preceded the onset of the parent's symptoms, pointing to a clear-cut sequential connection of events. From the point of view of a clinician, this suggests a depressive type of response. Indeed, several of the complaints voiced by respondents ring strongly of depression.

The role of spiritualism as a means of coping with schizophrenic behavior is discussed at length. Apparently, spiritualism provides a cohesive frame of reference for interpreting symptoms, as well as an institutionalized way of expressing tensions and anxieties to a highly receptive audience in a protective setting. Spiritualism is meaningful because it "is coterminous with the fabric of social life." A spiritual-

istic seance, such as the one described in Chapter 12, should be thoroughly studied in search of clues for shaping the kind of psychotherapeutic tools that the economically and culturally dispossessed mentally ill may need. In the words of a patient: "If psychiatrists were to know about spiritualistic matters they would be doctors in the broadest sense of the word."

The possible effects of mental illness on the next generation are carefully analyzed and here again differences are related to the sex of the infirm spouse. The incongruity between age of the child and grade at school is significantly related to mental status of the parents. It is greatest in the double-schizophrenic group, followed in descending order by the mother-schizophrenic group the control group and the father-schizophrenic group. Families with a schizophrenic father are apparently not only more harmonious and better integrated than the control families, but also have children who perform better at school. The clustering of severe behavior problems among children with schizophrenic mothers suggests a greater pathogenicity in this group and a gloomier outlook for the future.

In the final chapter the authors summarize their work in a concise and lucid manner and underline three findings; 1. life histories of healthy and sick persons are remarkably similar; 2. the perceived onset of illness follows a period of approximately 12 months during which the person experiences "a complex of interrelated crisis;" 3. schizophrenia is associated with inadequate role performance of the afflicted person and its effect on the family is related to the sex of the sick spouse.

This book has a unique value for anyone who wants to understand Latin-American culture. The masterful description of behavioral and social patterns in both health and disease achieves a level of genuine quality very seldom attained in previous works. By its unbiased authenticity and careful avoidance of lurid sensationalism, it is much closer to *Cuarto de despejo* (Children of the Dark) than to *The Children of Sanchez*.

For the Latin-American professionals in the behavioral, social and medical sciences this book represents a landmark and a challenge.

Hopefully it should be followed by epidemiological studies on incidence, prevalence and distribution patterns of mental illness as well as psychological, sociological and anthropological research on the factors that condition *nuestra manera de ser* (our way of being, our identity).

CARLOS A. LEON